



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Release Number: 56-05

Date: September 15, 2005

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Gift of Groceries can help military families displaced by Katrina

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Thousands of American troops are involved in relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Military families are also among those displaced by the disaster. Now a special link at <http://www.commissaries.com> will connect those interested in helping military families with a “gift of groceries.”

The donated gift certificates can be used to assist military families in purchasing groceries at the commissary while they are temporarily housed at other installations. Commissaries are a military benefit, providing groceries at cost to active duty, retired and Guard and Reserve families.

“Several organizations, including Air Force Aid Society, the USO and Fisher House Foundation already receive thousands of dollars in commissary gift certificates every year to help military families in need,” said Patrick B. Nixon, chief executive officer and acting director of the Defense Commissary Agency. “In this case, Fisher House Foundation and Air Force Aid Society are in a position to distribute gift certificates to military families from the affected area.”

“We are making it possible for people to earmark their donations for Katrina relief,” said Mike Baskerville, vice president of Certifichcks Inc. “The link will stay up until the need has been met.” The Gift of Groceries program is made possible through a business agreement with CertifiChecks Inc. at no cost to DeCA or the federal government. The program allows anyone to purchase commissary gift certificates to donate or give as gifts, but only authorized commissary shoppers can spend them.

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Air Force Aid Society is assisting with displaced families in the southern United States. About 1,000 evacuees are at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., and help is also needed at more than 10 other installations where evacuees are temporarily housed. Families at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., are already getting commissary gift certificates as they settle in, according to family support center officials.

“Thirty patients in their last trimester of pregnancy were relocated to Lackland Air Force Base [Texas] from Keesler [Air Force Base, Miss.],” said David Coker, executive director of Fisher House Foundation. The Fisher House Foundation has constructed 33 comfort homes for military families who have loved ones being treated at military medical centers. “We are also helping at other installations and in other situations. For instance, residents at the Navy Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport [Miss.] are now living at the AFRH home in Washington, D.C.”

The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of 30 percent or more on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$2,700 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.